Project I.D. No. 84

NAME: Nishimi, Toshihiko DATE OF BIRTH: 1898 PLACE OF BIRTH: Wakayama
Age: 76 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: 8yrs

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1915 Age: 17 M.S. Y.Y. Port of entry: Seattle
Occupation/s: 1. Farm laborer 2. Art dealer 3. Grocery store
Place of residence: 1. Los Angeles 2. _____ 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Wallaga
Name of relocation center: Tule Lake
Dispensation of property: Put in storage Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1 Kitchen supervisor 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: _____

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: Nov. '44
Address/es: 1. Sacramento 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 7/29/74 Place: Sacramento
Translator: Mabel Hall

T: Please tell me your name first.

A: My name is Toshihiko Nishimi.

Q: What is Mrs. Nishimi's name?

A: It is Shigeno Nishimi.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I am from Wakayama Prefecture.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in 1898.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am 76 years old.

Q: When were you born, Mrs. Nishimi?

A: I was born in 1902. I am 72 years old now.

Q: Are you from the same village in Wakayama as your husband?

A: Yes, I am.

Q: What kind of a family are you from? What was your father's occupation?

A: He was a carpenter. He was in America, but he became ill and was in a hospital in San Francisco for 8 months. After he went back to Japan I was born. When I was about 6 he went back to America.

When I was 17, my father sent for me from America. I arrived in America on May 15, and I was not 17 years old till May 29, but I was allowed to land, Since I landed at a strange place all alone, I did not know where to go to. I got on a tram and went from one end to the other. Then I met a Japanese man who told me that there is Fujii Hotel around the corner, so I went there and stayed there. As I had enough money to land and fare to go to Los Angeles I bought a ticket. My older brother who was in America came to pick me up. When I said to him, "I had already made arrangement to go by a train with a friend. Why don't you go sight-seeing in Seattle for a few days.", he was angry with me as he came all the way to pick me up. My brother said, "Let's take a ship home", but I told him that I wanted to take a train. I lost the argument when my brother offered to take me to the Panama Exposition in San Francisco. We took a small boat from Seattle, and I was seasick until we arrived at San Francisco.

Thing that impressed me most at the exposition was a noodle making machine that came from Germany. It had very delicate mechanism. When you put flour at one end the machine would knead it and noodle would come out from the other end. A lot of noodle was made in front of our eyes. I was surprised to see such a machine in 1915. That was the most impressive thing. I also saw the demonstration of wireless telegraph at that time.

Q: Did you say your brother is 8 years older than you?

A: Yes, he is about 8 years older than I.

Q: Did you recognize him the first time you saw him?

A: Yes, I did. He came to America when I was in grammar school. My father was one of the first 3 men who came to work in America from our village. There was one who came here as a student. As these men sent money home, everyone from our village came to America. At one time there were about 300 men from our village living around Los Angeles. Some men went to Seattle, and some went to but most of them were engaged in fishing and farming around Los Angeles.

Q: Were you 17 years old when you landed at Seattle?

A: It was a few days before my 17th birthday.

Q: What did you do after you went to the Exposition?

A: We went to Los Angeles by a ship. There was a Japanese restaurant named Habanaya on the corner of First and San Pedro Streets where the police department is standing now. We went there and had a Japanese dinner.

Q: With your brother?

A: Yes. As you look out from the restaurant there were country houses. After I quit Saji Company and started a business there were no trace of olden days. By that time buildings and sidewalks were built.

Q: What did you do first after you came to Los Angeles?

A: I picked lemon at Laguna, and on rainy days I worked in a lemon packing shed. In summer when there was no work I pasted labels on olives. My father was not a foreman, but he was in good terms with the white boss, and worked there the longest. Other people moved to other ranches where they get more pay, but my father did not move even though the wage was cheap.

Q: Did you come to America after you got married, Mrs. Nishimi?

A: I was married in Japan. We are married for 50 years now. We got married in January, and arrived in San Francisco on March 21.

Q: What year was it?

A: It was 1924. It was before Japanese immigrants could not come to America any more.

Q: Did your husband go back to Japan to take a wife?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: Did you come here with your husband?

A: Yes, I came here with my husband.

Q: What kind of a country did you think America was?

A: I came here thinking it was a nice place.

Q: What was your first impression of America?

A: I thought it was a nice place.

Q: What was your husband doing then?

A: He was working as a wholesaler of an art goods store.

Q: What was the name of the art goods store?

A: It was Sagi Company.

Q: What did they sell?

A: They sold all kinds of art goods such as vase and Chinaware.

Q: What was the name of the store?

A: It was called Sagi/Kariya Company. After the partner Mr. Kariya died of a heart attack, it was same Sagi Company.

Q: Was it in Los Angeles?

A: The wholesale store was in Los Angeles, and the retail store was on Broadway.

Q: What did you do after you came to America?

A: I worked as a domestic worker. At home I did all kinds of work.

Q: What kind of things did you do?

A: I sewed hadkerchiefs. After we opened a store I went to the store everyday taking small children with me.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: I had 4 children.

Q: Was a child born soon after you came to America?

A: Yes, so I didn't have a chance to go to school to learn English. When we get old we forget more than we learn.

T: Mr. Nishimi, you told me that your father worked long time under a boss.

N: My father was trusted by his boss very much. An hot summer season there was hardly any work as there were no oranges or lemon, so my father pulled weeds in lemon orchards and worked hard. The boss wanted me to go to the warehouse, so I went there and pasted labels on cans of olives. When I finished, the boss gave me 3 to 4 gallons of olive. He was very kind to me. I worked there for about 2 years. When I first came to America my father looked like an old man to me. Now that I am about 75 years old, I don't feel too old. I wanted my father to go back to Japan, so I gave all the money I earned to my father.

Q: Where was your father then?

A: He was living with me.

Q: Were you two working at the same place?

A: Yes, we ~~did~~ were. When other people were packing, my father carried the lemon to the freight train in a hand truck. He was a carpenter, but he did not work as a carpenter. As I wanted to learn English, I wanted to go to town. After about 2 years. I went to my cousin's

who was in wholesale and retail business of grocery, and stayed there for 5 to 6 years. During that time I attended a night school and learned English.

Q: What were you doing then?

A: I was working at a grocery store. I worked there until the store was closed. Then I stayed at for about 2 years. During that time I went to Japan and got married.

Q: What year was that?

Mrs. N.: It was 2 years before he married me, so it was around 1922.

Q: Did you go back to Japan?

A: Yes, I did.

Mrs. N: His former wife died.

Q: Did you get married then, once in 1922?

A: Yes, I did. At that time, my age on my passport was 21 years and 8 months. We came to America around September, and in March of the following year she died.

Q: What did she die from?

A: She died from meningitis. Two years later I married my present wife. She is a cousin of my former wife, and a year older.

Since my first wife died, I married my present wife. After I got married I worked at Sagi/Kariya Company which was a wholesale grocery store in Los Angeles for a long time.

Q: Was it a grocery store?

A: I worked there after I worked at the grocery store. A friend of my father and my brother, Mr. Junichi Hata was working as a foreman there. As his wife was sickly and he could not work in the store too much, I worked as his assistant. While I was working there I went to Japan and got married.

Q: When you went back to Japan did you know that you were going to get married to your present wife?

A: Marriage was already arranged. My wife's sister was farming in San Pedro then. After my former wife died I was very disheartened, so I went to the home of a good friend who came from the same village and asked him to let me stay there for a while. As he was busy, he made me pick cucumber. After I came back from Japan I started working at Sagi & Kariya Company. I worked at the grocery store 2 years after I came from Japan the first time. My first wife died while I was working at the grocery store.

Q: What kind of thing happened in the Japanese community in Los Angeles before you got married?

A: One incident which is still in my mind is that a boss of a gambling place was killed. At that time the boss of a gambling place was a very powerful man. In those days Japanese did not have voting rights.

They established Japanese Association. The candidates who wanted to become presidents campaigned hard.

Q: Did the president have privileges?

A: No, they just ran for a desire for fame. They spent a lot of money. They probably had much money. Japanese established Japanese Association, and was united under it.

Q: How were they united?

A: There were some Japanese who informed against the stow-aways. Lawyers like Sei Fujii published the Kashu Mainichi newspaper and accused those people.

Q: Did they catch the informers?

A: Yes. There was a man who did not have citizenship but had an authority as a policeman. He extorted money from informers. Men like Mr. Fujii stopped that. Many stow-aways worked in Japanese Association protected them. I think it was good to have such an organization.

Q: What kind of attitude did the white people have towards Japanese?

A: As I went into a labor camp right after I came to America I didn't know the white people too well. The boss was a big German, and he was bad.

Q: What was his job?

A: In those days there were no trucks, so he brought a cart pulled by horses. We put lemons we picked in it.

Q: What did he do?

A: He did mean things. He did not talk too much. After a while he went back to Germany as the World War I broke out. We were glad America entered the war.

Q: Were you persecuted by the white people when you first came to America?

A: No, nothing like that happened. At first I did not get good impression from the white people in Los Angeles. I live in Laurel Heights in Los Angeles now, but the white neighbors are all good to us.

Q: There weren't too many Japanese women when your wife came here, weren't there?

A: There were many. Before my time there were not enough women, so some men stole other men's wives or married someone's wife who had children. It could not be helped as there were not enough women.

Mrs. N: Some women came here as picture brides, so there were problems.

Q: What kind of problems were there?

A: I don't have such experience, but I heard some stories.

Q: What kind of stories did you hear?

A: They came here just by looking at photographs.without meeting the men. When a bride came here thinking her husband was a banker, she found out that he was a janitor of a bank. I think some women were disappointed by such thing and got divorced.

Q: There is not much difference of age between you two, but wasn't there much difference in ages between husbands and wives among most Isseis?

A: There were 10 to 15 years difference. Too much difference in ages caused much trouble. It is not good to marry too young.

Mrs. N: In Japan after the war women prefer men who are economically stable, so they do not mind marrying older men.

Q: What kind of problems will there be if you marry young?

A: I don't think it makes any difference whether young or old, if the husband and wife understand each other.

Q: Did you hear many stories about the picture brides?

A: I heard that in Seattle there was a man who was in business of selling women. He would use some men's names to get brides to America, and then sold the women. One woman who came to America as a bride of a man who used to live on Terminal Island near San Pedo became his wife.

Q: Did the man who sent for a bride to sell her married her?

A: Yes, he married the bride he was going to sell. There were such cases before I came to America.

Q: Did you hear anything else concerning the picture marriage?

A: Some of my friends had picture marriages, but there was hardly any trouble, and they are getting along smoothly. The marriages that the parents arranged were successful.

Mrs. N: I did not hear of any divorce.

T: Theye were few who eloped.

N: They were very few who did that kind of thing.

Q: Don't you think the brides who come to America alone are very brave?

Mrs. N: I think they had a slight feeling of uncertainty.

Mr. N: When I first came to America I stayed at Takasago Hotel in Kobe. My friend Mr. Kona had his wife with him. There was a picture bride in the same room. When she was looking at the picure of her husband we used to kid her saying, "If you don't study your husband's picture well you won't be able to find him." They are living very happily together now.

Side 2

Q: What did you do after you left Sagi Company?

A: I started grocery business by myself.

Q: When was that?

A: It was in 1929. I started a grocery store named Nishimi Company.

Q: Did you start the business alone?

A: Yes, I did. I worked with my cousin before, so those who remembered me were good to me.

Mrs. N: After the war, we traded only with cash.

Mr. N: Around 1932 was the worst time. I had around $15,000 in charge account, but we could not collect the money. Many big businesses went bankrupt. I don't know how I managed without cash.

Q: Did you continue the business during the Depression?

A: Yes, I did until the war broke out. As I worked at Sagi Company before, the bankers were good to me. I owed much money to the bank, but I paid back little at a time, and when the debt was paid off, and money started coming in ~~when~~ the war broke out.

Q: What was the hardest thing in managing a store?

Mrs. N: The money management was. Besides that, children were small, so I felt sorry for them.

Mr. N: My cousin who finished school in the East came and stayed at our house for a while before he went back to Japan. He scolded me for working my wife too hard making ~~me~~ her work at the store, and then she had to go home and do the housework and wash children's clothes till late at night. He told me to buy a washing machine for my wife.

Q: Mrs. Nishimi, what time did you used to get up in those days?

A: I used to get up around 6 or 6:30 in the morning.

Q: What did you do then?

A: I packed children's lunch, and after they went to school I went to the store with small children. The grade school was about a block from our house, and the highschool was behind our home. The life was easier by that time. We started the business when our oldest son was about 4 years old. That was the hardest time.

Q: What did you do at the store?

A: I attended to customers, ~~As~~ While my husband went in the country to take orders I tended the store. After my husband took orders I packed the grocery for him to deliver.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: I closed the store and came home by a tram.

Q: Around what time did you close the store?

A: It was around 9 o"clock by the time we came home.

Q: What time did you open the store in the morning?

A: Seven or 8 o'clock. I want to market by 6 o'clock, and it was after midnight when I came home.

Q: Was it a grocery business?

A: Yes, it was. And we worked 7 days a week.

Q: What did you do after you came home around 9'o'clock?

A: I washed and ironed clothes. In those days there was no washing machine, so I washed clothes by hand. I used to iron sheets and other things, but I became lazy and did not iron them.

Q: About what time did you go to bed?

A: Around midnight to 1 o'clock every night. We could do that because we were young. We cannot do such thing now. I think we should not do such thing when children are small. It is not good to work with small children. I felt sorry for the children. By the time we went home by tram at night small children were so sleepy that they would not walk. We had to walk about 2 blocks from the tram stop to our home, but they would not walk, so I had to carry them besides food to make lunch.

Q: Did you go home with your husband?

A: No, alone.

Q: What were you doing then, Mr. Nishimi?

A: I did not come back from the country till midnight.

Mrs. N: Sometimes he came home 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning.

Q: Around what time did you leave home in the morning, Mr. Nishimi?

A: Six o'clock. During the Depression it was hard to make a living even if we worked hard. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became the president he started N.R.A., and the things got better. Around the time he became president all the banks were closed, and we could not sash checks. I did not have cash even to buy bread with because all people gave me wase checks and no cash. Some stores would not sell anything unless you had cash. There was a good banker in North Hollywood, and he was good to me and cashed my checks.

Q: Could you cash the checks you received later?

A: Yes, I could.

Mrs. N: At one time we received a check for 30 bags of rice, and we found out that the check was bad.

Q: Did the man take 30 bags of rice and gave you a bad check?

A: Yes, he did.

Q: That was a big loss. How much was it?

A: We still have the check as a souvenir. There was another man in Torrence who wrote bad checks. He was in his 70's and was trusted by everyone even among the white people. I don't know why he did such a thing. He wrote a bad check at a white store.

Q: Didn't he go anywhere since then?

A: He couldn't show his face.

Q: Was he still there?

A: We don't know what became of him. He was from Torrence. Most people who bought on charge account paid us back when things got better, but if some people could not pay, we gave them time to pay us back.

Q: When they buy on charge account, do you have them sign in a book?

A: We just gave them a copy of the bill. We started the business when things started to get bad. A year later, in 1929, we made some profit so we bought two 1-ton trucks. Since then things started getting worse in 1930,'31 and '32. Fortunately the bank loaned us some money so we could continue the business.

Q: Did you have the capital when you started the business?

A: I cashed the insurance policy ~~in~~ which we paid in for about 10 years, and my sister's husband lend us $1,000, so with whatever I had we started the business.

Q: About how much capital did it take?

A: About $5,000. We made some profit in the first year, so we enlarged the business. But the Depression came and we could not get the money, so we were in trouble.

Q: Did things get better after the Depression was over?

A: Yes, the things got better and we recovered and we changed the way we did business, such as doing more business with customers who paid cash. By the time the war broke out we had paid off the mortgage, and things were getting better.

Q: Was the atmosphere between Japan and America getting bad around 1940 and '41?

A: Yes, it was bad.

Q: How did you know that? Did you read in the paper?

A: Letters kept on coming from Japan telling us that we had better go back to Japan as the condition is getting bad.

Mr. N: I think President Roosevelt was a good man, but he was too ambitious for power, so that led him to war. America sold oil to Russia, but would not sell it to Japan. It was Japan's fault, too, as the military was getting too powerful. That is why they went into war. When the war broke out I thought Japan was too reckless to start a war with a big country like America. I did not think Japan would fight with America, but I was wrong.

Q: Did the attitude of Americans toward Japanese get bad before Pearl Harbor attack?

A: There was no change. They were not particularly bad towards Japanese.

Q: Weren't you at your store at the time of Pearl Harbor attack?

A: On Saturday, day before Pearl Harbor attack, I went to Encino near Riverside and did some business with an acquaintance from Kumamoto Prefecture. As it was late I stayed at his house that night. At that time we did not know anything about the war. The next day we went to _____ near an Air Foree base. We took 2 big boxes of sake to a house near the base. As I was too fat then I was on diet and did not drink sake nor eat much rice and just ate vegetables. When I went into the children's room I saw many beds that he made for the children. Then I heard on the radio that Pearl Harbor was attacked, so I told the people that the war had broken out. Men were drinking sake, and said, "It can't be". So I took the radio and put it in the middle and told them to listen to it. The radio reported the Pearl Harbor attack and said bad things about Japan. Then they gave the names of Japanese taken away by F.B.I. Next morning there were signs on the road near the Air base that we have to maintain the same speed all the way, and if we go too fast we would be arrested. We stopped at Mr. Tanaka's who lived near the base. They had come back from Japan just before the war as their son was studing in the East, and they had property in America. Before they left Japan they saw Japanese troops lined up and leaving for somewhere. Later Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Q: Did you stop by at Mr. Tanaka's?

A: Yes, I did. The following week I heard that F.B.I. men went to Mr. Tanaka's neighbor's right after I left. When I went home my wife was worried about me as I did not come home till midnight.

I was scared then. I got up early the next morning and after doing some business I had breakfast at a restaurant. When I went there the following day, the owner wasn't there. I found out that he was taken away by the F.B.I. the night before. Another man taken away by the F.B.I. was the father of my bother's wife. He had sent his wife and children back to Japan, and was working as a gardener. That Sunday being his day-off, he went to _____ near Riverside with two of his friends. When he was taking pictures there he was arrested by F.B.I. and was taken to the county jail in Pasadena. After checking around we found out that he was in jail.

Mrs. N: We did not know why he was put in jail. He was put in a solitary cell.

Mr. N: There was a Japanese pastor named Rev. Fujisawa from whom we heard that a war broke out between Japan and America. When I went to F.B.I. to see Mr. Nakanishi about the house he was renting, F.B.I. investigated me thoroughly.

Q: What did they question you about?

A: They questioned me about my profession, when I came to America and everything else. They told me that I did not have to see him.

Q: Was he put in a solitary cell because they thought he was a spy?

A: I think they did as he was taking pictures. He did not know that the war had broken out. In those days some people were taken away while waiting for tram cars.

Mrs. N: At one time a strange phocall came saying that Filippinos were coming to attack Japanese the following day.

Mr. N: A Filippino complained that we broke a car window. I told him "Anytime you want to fight with me, come to me." They threatened us, so I threatened them.

Mrs. N: As there was a threat of an attack, some Japanese hired special policemen, but nothing happened.

Q: Wasn't the relationship between Japanese and Filippinos not too good?

A: It was good, but after the war broke out they considered Japanese as enemies. Before the war they were good customers, but after the war broke out they stopped coming. I don't think all the Filippinos are bad. If we are good to them, they will be good to us. I did not have any trouble around here. Four or five years after I came here Black people built houses on the 2 empty lots and moved in. They were good people, but all the white people around here moved out. There are no bad people around here. They are all good to me.

T: I think there is no bad people once you become friends with them.

N: If we are good to them, they will be good to us.

Mrs. N: Our neighbor's wife was good to me. As I used to come home after dark, she would leave the porch light on for me.

Mr. N: I had a light at the oorner of the house, one in between there and the garage, and one on the alley beyond the garage, and set it so that all three lights would light up at once. As I used to come home late at night, our neighbor had the lights on for me.

Q: What happened after the war broke out and some people were arrested by the F.B.I.?

A: The reason we came to Sacramento was that my brother who was in business with me had come to Sacramento 5 years before then and was working as a watchman at Ikuta/Yamada's rice ranch. When the war broke out, the ranch was under surveilance of the F.B.I. I wrote and phoned him but had no answer. Later I found out that the government told him to manage a 300-acre rice ranch near Chico, and he wanted me to come to Sacramento and help him. I put all my belongings on a pick-up, put my wife and children on a train and came to Sacramento.

Q: When did you close the store?

A: After the war broke out I was the first one to close the store, as my brother wanted me to come to Sacramento and help the rice ranch. At that time there was a confinement order and we could not go far, but when I told the authority that I had to go and help the rice ranch they gave me a special permit to travel.

Mrs. N: When I came they did not let us get on the train for a long time as they had to check up on me. When we got on board the train they pulled down the shades where my children and I were sitting so that we could not see outside.

Q: Did you sell everything when you closed the store?

Mrs. N: We wanted to dispose of the store rather than making money, so we sold everything dirt-cheap. At that time we had to dispose of the household goods from 4 families. The husband of Nishimi's sister was taken away by the F.B.I., and his family had to leave the Terminal Island within 24 hours. We had to dispose of the household goods of Mr. Nakamura who was put in a solitary cell as well as our own.

Mr. N: We had a 3-car garage, so we put all the household goods in it, but we still had to build a shed to put things that we could not sell such as bowls and dishes, and food that were not perishable. It was the first time for me to do the carpentry so I had a hard time trying to make the door close. We put things in the shed and locked the door, but many things were stolen. Penzoil in 50 gallon barrel with a pump was stolen.

Q: Did you buy your house?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Did somebody live there?

A: A friend of our neighbor wanted to rent the house. In those days the rent of a house like ours was about $40, but they wanted us to lower it to $25 as they would watch the house, so we leased it for $25 a month. They asked us to leave the piano and the ice box in the house, so we did. A friendly White man said he will keep our shortwave radio for us, so we let him keep it, but we never got it back.

Mr. N: We knew him since he was in highschool. He was about my age and a good friend of mine, but he did such a thing.

Q: Did you build a shed and put remaining things that you could not put in your garage?

A: I put household goods of my relations in it, also. People who went to Denver left their belongings at my house. I did not know what to do with them, so I went to WRA and got their addresses, and sent the stuff to them. Many of my belongings were stolen. Unsold goods were mostly sold at Tule Lake.

Q: Did you come to Sacramento after you disposed of the household goods?

A: The reason we went to Sacramento was children's cousin was there. My son went to Des Moines and from there he went to New York. In New York he got a job and went to school and studied photography as he liked it. In the meantime he was drafted in the Army. As he studied photography at school, he taught photography in the Army. He had it made as he could commute from his house to the base.

Our daughter was in Minesota and married our distant relation. The groom's parents wanted our daughter as the son's bride. It was o.k. with me, but I didn't want them to get married if they didn't want to, so I told my daughter just to associate with the young man. They are married and are living in Los Angeles now.

Q: Mrs. Nishimi, where did you go after you came to Sacramento by train?

A: My husband had rented a house for us,

Q: Whereabouts in Sacramento?

A: It was on U Street. In those days there were not many cars in Sacramento.

Mr.N: It was on U Street between 3rd and 4th.

Q: Was it near the park?

A: Yes, it was. We shared a house with the Mitsudomes. We lived upstairs and they lived downstairs. We shared the living-room upstairs.

Q: About how many days later did you arrive here, Mr. Nishimi?

A: I arrived here the following day by a pick-up truck.

Q: Where was your brother?

A: He was on 7th Street.

Q: Where was the ranch?

A: It was at Nelson. The war broke out, so we went to Wallager and then to Tule Lake.

Mrs. N: We went to camp a month after we moved here from Los Angels.

Q: Did you know that you had to go to camp when you came here?

A: We were told that we would be safe for about a year, but we had to go to camp a month later.

Mrs. N: While I was in Wallager, a friend of mine in Los Angeles went shopping downtown as Japanese in Los Angeles area evacuated later, and bought me a set of shogi and sent it to me to play in the camp. I played shogi once with an acquaintance next door, but when I won the game, I did not want to play more and lose, so we quit playing.

Q: Were you surprised when you heard that you had to go to a camp?

Mrs. N: We knew we had to go sooner or later.

Mr. N: Before the evacuation was announced, Mr. S. an F.B.I. agent told me and my relation that we had to evacuate, so we knew about it before it was announced in the paper.

Q: How did you feel when you went to Wallager?

A: I felt as if I could not stand the life there. An aquaintance of mine from Los Angeles, Mr. Kitamura was a carpenter in Wallager. As my sister suggested I learn carpentry under Mr. Kitamura, I worked as a cappenter under him. The white people told us to build an icebox, but as they did not let us work the way we wanted to, we went on a strike. It was the first time I went on a strike since I came to America. Finally, the white people gave in, and asked us to help. While we were building the icebox, we were told to go to Tule Lake.

Q: How did you feel when you first lined up at the messhall?

A: It was hot, and if we were late there was no food left. So I went back to my barracks, opened up canned ~~offd~~ food and ate them.

Q: Were there all kinds of trouble as people were restless?

A: There were all kinds of trouble in Tule Lake?

Q: Wasn't there any trouble at Wallager?

A: No, there wasn't.

Q: How long did you stay at Wallager?

A: About a month. There was too much trouble in Tule Lake.

Q: What kind of trouble was there?

A: Mr. Hitomi was killed. He was living in the next block, so we were friends and used to visit each other. He was the chief of the co-op and my brother was his assistant. There was trouble, so he wanted to quit, but they didn't let him quit. I think it was 4th of July, and my brother went to help him in the daytime. I told him that I would go with him that night, but he took off without me. That night when Mr. Hitomi came back and was going to open the screen door when he was stabbed from behind. A friend of mine from Los Angeles told me that I was in danger.

Q: Why were you in danger?

A: Because my brother was working with Mr. Hitomi at the Co-Op. He was in the blacklist of people to be killed.

Q: Why was Mr. Hitomi hated so much?

A: It was not true, but he was suspected of embezzling Co-Op's money.

Q: Did they hate him enough to kill him?

A: I think there were some other complicated reasons. We feel very sorry for him. He was the victim of the war. A man was shot at the gate by a soldier who hated Japanese. As he was coming out of the gate on a truck he was told to get off. When he got off, he was shot. At that time I said to Mr. Hitome, "It has been dangerous around here, so we had be very careful. We don't want to get killed for nothing."

Mrs. N: After that, the Victory Group ran around the barracks from 4 O'clock in the morning.

Mr. N: While I was working as a carpenter I had a disordered stomach, and the doctor told me to eat small meals 4 to 5 times a day. I could not do such a thing, so I quit the job and worked in the mess hall. The head of the mess hall told me that I had accumulated 200 hours of overtime, so I had better take a rest. I did not want to take a rest, so I kept on working putting in windows and doors. The white people in the mess hall were good to me.

Q: Did you have a chance to go to another camp?

A: Mr. Shinohara's family, my brother and my family were only three families that did not have the hearing. When I entered Rule Lake I put in request to go to Japan to visit my folks, so I did not have a hearing. Later they told us to go outside the camp, but I said I did not want to go to other states beside California.

Q: Was your son in the service when you were at Tule Lake?

A: Kiyoshi was in a school in Des Moines then. He joined the service after we left the camp.

Q: What were you going to do with your children if you went back to Japan?

A: Most people renounced their children's citizenship, but we didn't. We left it up to the children, and they did not want to renounce their citizenship. There was a bad man who told me that so and so renounced their citizenship. I said it was not right for others to renounce children's citizenship unless it was their will.

Q: Did the "No, No Group? people call those who did not renounce citizenship, "Dogs"(spies)?

A: Yes, they called those who did not renounce citizenship "spies".

Q: Were you called "Spies"?

Mrs. N: Not directly, but they said such thing behind our backs.

Mr. N: I became ill, so I worked in a mess hall. As I could not cook, I worked as a steward. Later I was made a supervisor, who had to do everything. I received all kinds of blackmail then.

Q: Why was that?

A: I received such blackmail as, "Youwillbbe harmed if you do not quit working today." I took the letter to the police station

and asked them to find out who wrote the letter. Since everyone had fingerprints taken, they found out who wrote the letter, but they didn't arrest him. I took the letter to the block manager and said, "Everybody in the block should get along well. There is no use quarrelling among Japanese. Even if we do not like something, we should be patient and get along with others." I have the names of those who wrote that kind of letters, so if anyone in this block do it again, I will have him arrested. Then his family will be in trouble, and it will be the shame of the block. It is your responsibility as a manger to prevent such thing from happening." The manager said, "What you said is right, but please do not arrest the man", so I did not have him arrested.

Q: Why do they say such offensive thing?

A: I don't know why, but they didn't like the leaders. When I took the chief's place and changed personnel, I gave chance to the newcomers and asked them to do whatever I tell them to do, so they worked hard. I took place of Mr. Hitomi who was killed. Mr. Hitomi did not do anything, but as I was a carpenter I made a pantry with boards from crates, and put up shelves so that we could stack up canned goods. I made the shelf space smaller in order to have a bigger working space. I put the stocks on the shelves as soon as they came in. When the white chief came around he told me that the worst mess hall had become the best, and he treated me to chicken dinner several times. The white inspectors were all good people. If we were good to them, they were good to us.

They had too much money to spare, so they told me that they would give me anything I wanted. When they asked me what I wanted, I told them that I wanted mayonaise as it was hard to get it. They brought me a case of mayonaise. The white people were good to us if we were good to them.

Then the bosses changed, and two new white man came. It was around the end of the war, so I brewed some sake in a 50-gallon bottle in order to cultivate mutual friendship. The white men said they would give me wine if I liked it. It was not good to brew sake, but they allowed me to do it as it was for the good cause.

We were supposed to work every other day in the camp, but as I did not like to have nothing to do I worked everyday. About 10 crates of vegetables were delivered everyday, and we separated them for cooking and for making pickles. In other mess halls women helped make pickes, but I did it all by myself. Those who brewed sake wanted some rice. As I had plenty of rice I gave rice to them, so they gave me sake. I did not drink sake I gave it to those who liked it. I asked them to give me koji (malted rice) instead of sake, and with it I made miso (bean paste). That was the first time we had miso in Tule Lake. About a year later miso was supplied.

I brewed sake, made pickles and miso as I did not like having nothing to do.

T: You didn't stay home much, didn't you.

N: I didn't like to sit around.

Mrs. N: After people could go out to other camps, he made boxes every day.

T: For those who were moving out of the camp?

Mrs. N: Yes, for those who were leaving the camp.

N: I made a lot of boxes.

Mrs. N: When we came to the camp we thought we could never go back to freedom.

Q: Did you think you could never come back here again?

A:. Yes, we did, but we could come home. Things became better than before the war.

Mr. N: Mr. Nakamura who was in a drug store business in Los Angeles was in the same camp with us. He renounced his American citizenship while he was in the camp. After they came back from the camp they opened a drug store on the corner of L and 3rd Streets, but as he had renounced his citizenship he had to pagister the store under his wife's name. In my block my brother and I and Mr. Shido's son were the only ones who did not renounce our citizenship. He was sorry he did not consult with me although he lived not too far from where we lived. His wife's sister used to work with me at Saji Co. I did not know that till after we left the camp. One day when I visited his house he bought on 6th Street between X and W, I saw the picture of his wife's sister who used to work with me. It's a small world. At that time he said that he did a dumb thing when he renounced his citizenship listening to others. That is why he had to operate the store under his wife's name.

Q: When did you come back from the camp?

Mrs. N: He left in November of 1944, and I left there in January "45.

Mr. N: The reason I left earlier was that my brother's children had to go to a highschool. People were still living in my brother's house, so we lived in a ~~toei~~ motel owned by a Mexican, and the children went to school from there. After my brother came back, he bought a billiard. He leased the billiard to others and lived upstairs.

Q: Did your wife join you later?

A: I went to the camp to pick her up.

Mrs. N: When we left the camp the youngest child was 2 years old. He thought Tule Lake was his home, so he cried on the train coming here wanting to go home. When he heard the church bells rings in Sacramento he used to say, "Mama, the mess hall bell is ringing."

Mr. N: I used to say that by the time that child becomes of age there will be another war, and he would become a soldier. Sure enough, he became a soldier, and was sent to Viet Nam. At first he was sent to Japan. We were going to Japan on a tour with the Ikenobo group and meet him in Japan, but as the tour was postponed we could not see him, so we cancelled the tour.

Q: What did you do after you quit the billiard?

A: I became a carpenter.

Q: About how long did you work as a carpenter?

A: I learned carpentry under Mr. Miura from 1945 to 1949. Then I started the Heian Co. with Mr. Murata as my partner. When I was 65 years old I fell from a roof and was injured, so I retired.

Q: How old were you when you came back from the camp in 1945?

A: I was in my 40s.

Q: Was it hard to start making a living after you came back?

A: Yes, it was quite hard.

Q: Did the white people ever say unpleasant thing or gave you a hard time?

A: When I was working with Mr. Iwasaki, some Filippinos and black people came to my house, and said,"Go home!" When I replied, "This is my home", they said, "Go back to Japan." I told the black people to go back to Africa. Filippinos said unpleasant things.

Mrs. N: Filippino drug store would not serve Japanese customers.

Mr. N: Before Mr. Nakamura bought the drug store, Filippinos were managing it. They had a sign saying no Japanese allowed. When Mr. Masaoka saw it, he called the F.B.I. and had the sign removed.

Q: What else do you remember about the time you came back?

A: I worked on the railroad. Since I came to America I ~~only~~ worked only in the stores and rice ranch, so I did not have any experience in picking tomatoes or grapes. That is why I wanted to do all kinds of work before I started working on one definit job. As a friend of mine told me that they were recruiting railroad workers I went to try for the job. Men who were almost 70 years old were working with shovels, but I was tired as I did not know the know-how. Before we were taken to work on a truck in the morning a foreman was talking in a loud voice, so I said, "Shut up!". The foreman called me and asked me what I said, so I told him that I said "Be quiet!" because he was talking too loud. He asked me if I said, "Go to hell!", so I replied, "No, I didn't, You can ask anybody." Our foreman was a Mexican. He used to give Japanese a hard time telling us to do this and do that. I did not obey him.

As I was a carpenter before, at one time my job was to lay crossties on the railroad. I went about 100 feet forward and laid crossties. When they said "Okay", I moved another 100 feet forward. It was not an easy job, but it was better than shoveling gravels. I laid railroad from [illegible] to the freeway going to Reno.

Q: How long did you work on the railroad?

A: I worked about 2 months. After working for about 2 months I asked to be discharged. Then I worked in a lumberyard as I was a carpenter. Three Japanese were hired then. The manager of the lumberyard retired about a month after we went there, but he was very happy with us. As Japanese worked hard, a white man called me at one time and asked me if I was thirsty. When I went there all the white workers were smoking and were loafing. As I was a carpenter the foreman gave me another job of going to a warehouse to pick up lumber. The white workers did not work hard. There was a man whose job was to put numbers on the lumber which would have taken only about an hour, but he loafed away his time. When a new foreman came I asked him to be released as I was a carpenter but was trying all kinds of jobs as I was not doing anything. He wrote down what I said, and made me sign the paper. I was released.

I became a carpenter again. As I like carpentry so much that I never get tired of doing it all day. When I started my own business I had enough work to keep me busy. I just took enough job that I could do by myself. While I was working at Mr. Miura's I did some painting, so it helped me later. I like to work, but if I get too tired I cannot sleep at night. If I work at one house, their neighbors and friends want me to work for them. I told them I cannot do it, but they told me to do at my convenience. Some people waited for about a year.

Q: What was the religion of your family?

A: It was the Zen sect.

Q: Do you belong to the Nichiren Sect?

A: Yes, I do. There was no Church for the Zen sect here. Most of my relations belonged to Koyasan. Mr. Takahashi used to be my good customer, so I contributed to the Nichiren church. While I was in camp I had many friends who belonged to the Nichiren Sect, so after I came home I became a member of the Nichiren Sect. Even before I became a member I did much carpentry work for the church.

Q: Did you go to school in Japan?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How many years?

A: I just went to a grammar school.

Q: Was it 6 years?

A: It was 8 years.

Q: What kind of subject did you like?

A: I liked calligraphy and painting.

Q: Did you have such subjects asehistory and math?

A: I liked history and also geography. I used to draw maps at home and put in the capitals and populations. I used to know well about Viet Nam and around that area.

Q: Did you have fun at school? Do you remember about your teachers?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: What kind of teachers were there?

A: There was a lady teacher who taught music. As I did not like to sing I never sang in the class. At the exam time she called my name, but I did not sing, so she did not give me any point. That year I had a bad report card. A friend of mine, Sakamoto failed school when he was in the 6th grade as he turned in an exam paper with just a circle on it. Later he came to America and made a fortune, and sent the money to Japan. He is living comfortably in Japan now. When I met him in America he was reading a hard book. I think he studied a lot. Some people change when they grow up.

Q: What kind of things happen in Japan while you were there?

A: The principal of my school and my relations wanted me to become a carpenter. I liked carpentry but I was not going to become a carpenter. My father was a good carpenter, but after he had a few children he could not make a living as a carpenter, so he came to America. I didn't want to follow his footstep. I thought there should be something better to do. That is why I did not want to become a carpenter, but I finally became a carpenter,

I went to Osaka with my relatives Kenta Harukaze and _____ Kizu to take examinnation at a trade school. Kizu passed the exam but Harukaze and I failed. On the way home we went to see a movie at Dotonbori. When we came home we were scolded by Kizu's father. In those days I wanted to go to a high school, but the principal and my relations all wanted me to become a carpenter. As I failed the examination at the trade school I made up my mind to come to America, and that is how I came to America.

Q: Sanseis nowadays are very aware of being Japanese. What do you think about that? Do you think it is a good thing?

A: I think it is good.

Q: As an Issei, is there anything you want to teach Sanseis and your grandchildren?

A: I think Niseis and Sanseis will do fine with their own ideas. I think the parents should not interfere with their lives once they are married and started living their own lives. I leave them alone. That is my principle.

Q: Isseis experienced much hardships. Do you think it is good for a person to experience hardships?

A: We could not help it. We had to experience hardships.

Mrs.N: When young people have families they have responsibilities, so they work hard.

Mr. N: Our second son who was born in the camp is married and is working now. When he came back from Viet Nam he did not want to go to school. He could not find a job just with highschool education, so he went to a junior college and then graduated from the state university and got his present job. After he came back from the service he became responsible for what he did. He graduated from the university with a high grade.

Mrs. N: About half a year after he came back from Viet Nam he did not do anything but lay around. He must have uneasiness in his mind. We were worried about him.

Mr. N: But he volunteered for the Marine Corps, so he could not complain.

Mrs. N: The training seemed to be very hard.

Mr. N: The basic taining seemed to be very hard, so I told my sister's son not to join the Marine Corp, but he joined it. He came home safely.

While he was in the Marine Corp he learned photography, so he worked as a photographer when he was stationed in Japan. After he went to Viet Nam he also worked as a photographer.